

PE2048/I: Review the FAST stroke awareness campaign

Minister for Public Health and Women's Health written submission, 12 November 2024

Thank you for the response of the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee following its consideration of PE2048 at its meeting of 9 October. The Committee highlights the contributions from Alexander Stewart MSP and Stephen Kerr MSP calling for a trial of BE FAST to support further data on the BE FAST. I note the Committee is also seeking an update on work to establish existing levels of awareness of stroke symptoms and whether this work includes consideration of the awareness among clinical staff of symptoms beyond those captured by the FAST test.

Research of existing levels of awareness of stroke symptoms and FAST, commissioned by the Scottish Government, has now been completed. This research will inform our future public awareness campaigns to ensure we maximise stroke awareness.

The Scottish Government does not currently plan to run local trials of BE FAST in individual Health Boards. This would be a decision for an individual Board to make and, as highlighted in my reply to Jackson Carlaw MSP, Convener, Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee (CPPPC) of 21 December 2023, the Scottish Government does not currently plan to deviate from the use of FAST. This stance aligns with the positions of both Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland and the Stroke Association.

However, as I stated in my previous response, the National Advisory Committee for Stroke will be asked to review any emerging evidence regarding public awareness and stroke screening tools and provide advice to the Scottish Government regarding the most appropriate action.

I also mentioned in my previous reply we would consider how awareness of the less common symptoms of stroke can be increased. The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care and I met the Bundy family earlier this year to discuss their campaign work and to pass on our sincere condolences. At the meeting in April, the Cabinet Secretary asked the CMO Specialty Advisor for Stroke, and Chair of the National Advisory Committee for Stroke, Dr Matt Lambert, to review stroke awareness education for clinical staff.

The review has informed the development of an education package, funded by the Scottish Government, to be delivered to staff in GP practices, Emergency Departments, and the Scottish Ambulance Service. Although focusing on FAST, this education will also cover the less common presentations of stroke, including specific symptoms relating to visual field defects and certain presentations of loss of balance.

I wrote to stroke accountable individuals at NHS Boards in September to encourage staff to sign-up up to the Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland FAST education package sessions when these become available. I also Chaired a roundtable meeting with the stroke accountable individuals on 10 October, where I emphasised the importance of

the recognition of stroke symptoms and asked attendees to take the lead and discuss this educational opportunity with their colleagues to maximise engagement.

I hope this update is useful and thank you again for your correspondence.

Yours sincerely,

JENNI MINTO MSP